DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 245 798 PS 014 319

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TITLE Child Development and Cultural Diversity.
PUB DATE Aug 83
NOTE 8p.; Based on paper presented at the OMEP World Assembly (Geneva, Switzerland, August 16, 1983).
PUB TYPE Journal Articles (080) -- Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
JOURNAL CIT Future 8; p6-12, Aut 1983.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Child Advocacy; *Child Development; Childhood Needs; Childrens Rights; Cognitive Style; *Cultural Differences; *Cultural Influences; Developmental Stages; Environmental Influences; *Individual Characteristics; Parent Influence; Social Environment

ABSTRACT

Each child is to some extent like all children, to some extent like some children, and to some extent like no other child. There are at least three sets of universals that characterize children: (1) they have the same needs and rights; (2) they go through the same developmental stages; and (3) they have essentially the same developmental goals, even through these goals will be manifest in different ways within each cultural group. Commonalities exist among children growing up within certain social and cultural groups, making them similar to some children and highlighting the extent to which they are different from others. These commonalities include patterns of social and physical environmental experiences to which children are exposed, developmental end points that can be observed in different settings, and cognitive styles that characterize children's approaches to situations in which they must arrive at deductions about the proper relationship between figure and ground. Each child is unique in terms of genetic potential, sensory capacity, history of reinforcement, ability to relate to other people, energy level, temperament, interests, motivation, and many other characteristics. Those who would be advocates for children should adopt a global perspective, respect and preserve the unique cultural heritage of all children, and respect and foster individuality. (RH)

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child development and cultural diversity

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BETTYE M CALDWELL

One of the most delightful aspects of international travel is the opportunity it provides to observe what other groups of people do with, for, to and about their children. As a hopeless "child-watcher," I can never refrain from observing children wherever I travel. Thus, the first time I walked through Regency Park in London, at which time the floral display was quite spectacular, I spent as much time looking at the mothers and fathers and young children strolling in the park as I did looking at the flowers. Similarly, in Oslo in the magnificent Vigeland Gardens I noticed that the fathers rather than the mothers were likely to push the strollers. In Budapest I noticed how many parks there were for young children right in the heart of the city and how parents walking with their little ones never seemed to hurry them as we do in America. In the People's Republic of China one notices the little children arrayed in brightly coloured clothes in contrast to the rather conservative clothes (gray, brown, and navy blue) worn by the parents and that all children are gratified and seemingly indulged in an otherwise austere country. And in California one can watch with delight as young parents stuff their little ones in back packs and climb mountains and take cross-country hikes, giving the children all the warmth and closeness generally associated with babies in Africa or Latin America. In other places in America we see babies carried about in infant seats, propped in supermarket carts, and not infrequently frowned at or scolded if they try to handle any of the items on the shelves or their parent's purchases.

From such observations, and from our reading of the vast and informative literature on cultural influences on child development (e.g., Werner, 1979), it is easy to allow ourselves to conclude that such variations are so extreme as to preclude any generalizations about child development which might be considered truly universal. Yet the visible (and audible) differences sometimes obscure the

commonalities in child development, which, to be sure, are there. Thus we can comfortably assert that *each child is to some extent like all children, to some extent like some children, and to some extent like no other child.* I shall explore some of these universals, commonalities and individualities.

universals

In many important ways, each child is like all other children. They are first and foremost biological creatures, dependent on the same set of conditions to sustain life that are needed by all living creatures—water, food, oxygen, etc. The very fact that these resources are not evenly distributed among the world's children, however, makes for some of the differences observed between and among children and adults from different parts of the world. To give the most obvious example, stature and weight are clearly influenced by the available food supply and by culturally sanctioned food habits and preferences.

There are at least three sets of universals which can be identified for children: (1) They have the same needs and rights; (2) they go through the same developmental stages; (3) they have essentially the same developmental goals, even though these will be manifest in different ways within each cultural group. Each of these universals will be discussed briefly.

needs and rights

Children all over the world have the same needs and hopefully are entitled to the same rights. Again, however, there may be wide differences in the extent to which different cultures can meet these needs and assure these rights. In 1979, which was declared the International Year of the Child by the United Nations, a list of children's rights, revised slightly from a version written 30 years earlier, was widely circulated as indicative of goals to be striven for throughout the world. Ensuring for all children an opportunity to have all these rights fulfilled will depend upon these mediators.

national philosophy

Attitudes toward children that become part of the social and political philosophy of a nation are important factors in determining whether their needs will be met and their rights fulfilled. Any society with a future orientation will see to it that children receive attention in times of disaster. In many parts of the world today we would have to say that children have no opportunity to be brought up in a spirit of peace and brotherhood/sisterhood. The most horrifying journalistic records of war and terrorism are always the pictures of infants or young children left weeping (Or too terrified to weep) beside the ruins of their home and the bodies of their families. The free play of children either in countries experiencing hostilities or in societies in which such actions are glamorized will reflect the life events and/or societal acceptance of such events, causing us all to wonder whether the millions of children affected by such national philosophies have any likelihood of achieving their rights to grow up in a spirit of peace. And certainly discrimination based on "race, colour, sex, religion, national or social origin" either singly or in some combination keeps millions of children from the fulfillment of these rights in spite of the universality of the needs upon which the rights are based.

parental values and behaviour

Although the rights which I have grouped under the mediating influence of parental values and behaviour are fewer in number, they are by far broader and more pervasive in terms of psychological meaning and developmental impact. A slightly Americanized version of the first right on this list has been published as "the right to grow up nurtured by affectionate parents." To be sure, this is the connotative meaning of the item on the UN list, for "affection, love, and understanding" need to come first from our parents if they are to have much meaning for us in our subsequent interpersonal relationships. Although we do not like to admit it, there are countless numbers of children all over the world who have to grow up without parental love and affection. In the United States, for example, it is estimated that one million children per year suffer some degree of child abuse and that even more are significantly neglected. It is not uncommon to read occasionally of parents who offer to sell a child or group of children to another set of parents, into prostitution, or into some condition approaching slavery. Likewise, the spectre of infanticide, especially of girls, has by no means disappeared from the face of the earth.

But social and demographic changes far less dramatic and macabre than these examples are making it difficult for children to know what it means to have a right to "affection, love, and understanding." Family changes throughout the world are occurring with such rapidity that child-rearing patterns as we have traditionally known them are of necessity being significantly modified. For example, it is estimated that one out of three new marriages in the United States will end in divorce within the first five years. We read that in European Russia, it is one of two. In many of those families, remarriage of one or both partners will frequently occur within a short time, which means that the children will have to adapt to a revised family constellation, frequently with abrupt and virtually total disruption of the emotional relationship that previously existed with one of the parents (usually the father). Compounding the high incidence of divorce with the fact that approximately 20 percent of America's children are now born into one-parent situations, forces the realization that about one out of two children will spend some growing-up time in a one-parent family. While such figures are relevant mainly to the industrialized west, similar disruptions of family life occur in many other parts of the world. As industrialization proceeds in various countries, many families leave rural areas and migrate to the cities. The pattern of this migration often involves having fathers leave first to find employment, and then subsequently to send for their wives and children. But this does not always happen, which means that the old families are sometimes abandoned and new ones established in the city. Thus by no means can all children count on having their need and right for affection, love, and understanding met in the complex conditions of rapid social change which exist in many parts of the world today.

Similar points could be made about the difficulties of ensuring for every child a recognizable name and nationality. Mass migrations of peoples are occurring all over the globe—not just from village to city, but from orient to occident, from below the equator to above, etc. Land masses are being divided anew every year; there is nothing

as out of date as a gazeteer older than ten years. Millions of children grow up in refugee camps intended to provide only temporary shelter and emergency food and water, knowing little of the country from whence they came and less of the one to which they will eventually be moved. In some geographic regions children are born after their parents move into a new country without benefit of passport, making them ineligible for health and welfare benefits. Many reach school age without the necessary citizenship papers which entitle them to an education. *Children* are swept along with the tide of such displacements and migrations and, in the process, have great difficulty learning who they are and where they belong.

societal resources

On the lower side of Figure 1 we find the UN list of universal children's rights that are dependent upon societal resources. Adequate nutrition will be contingent upon agricultural production, which in turn will be limited by natural forces such as amount of rainfall and availability of arable land. Quality medical care is not likely to be provided in a culture in which virtually all the creativity and energy of the group must be devoted to the task of trying to raise enough food for the population. In subsistence economies, such rights as education and time for play and recreation become luxuries likely to be minimally available to any of the group, and handicapped individuals may have an even greater struggle to be accorded rights to a share of the necessities for existence rather than any sort of special care. Yet, despite wide differences in the availability of societal resources which are necessary for the fulfillment of these rights, all children the world over do indeed need these benefits if they are to develop fully and become able to make their contribution to the societies of which they are members. There are no differences from one cultural group to another in the extent to which these rights apply to their lives; the differences exist only in the extent to which children in different groups achieve them.

sequence of developmental stages

A second universal characteristic that can be identified is the sequence of developmental stages through which children must proceed. In the process of evolving toward ever more mature individuals, in spite of incredible diversity of specific cultural input into the developmental process, and in spite of wide cultural differences in the age of acquisition of particular stages and in the achievement of what might be considered the terminal stage, the process itself and the sequence of change appears to be a measure of our humanity. One could illustrate this principle by a discussion of several theoretical formulations of development, but how could one discuss it in Geneva without reference to Piaget! There has been a great deal of cross-cultural research on Piagetian theory (see especially Dasen, 1977) which helps to demonstrate the universality of the sequence. The theory (Piaget, 1970) would suggest that the child goes through a series of invariant stages of cognitive development, each of which is qualitatively different from the one which preceded and the one which will follow. These stages become manifest as the child interacts with the environment during the first two decades of life. Although often described in slightly different terms, the major stages are generally called the sensorimotor, concrete-operational, and formal-operational.

Figure 1 Children's Rights (U.N. Declaration) classified according to source of mediating influence.

NATIONAL PHILOSOPHY
The right to be among the first to receive relief in times of disaster.
The right to be brought up in a spirit of peace and universal brother-hood.
The right to enjoy these rights, regardless of race, colour, sex, religion, national, or social origin.
PARENTAL VALUES AND BEHAVIOUR
The right to affection, love and understanding.
The right to a name and nationality.
SOCIETAL RESOURCES
The right to adequate nutrition and medical care.
The right to free education.
The right to full opportunity for play and recreation.
The right to special care, if handicapped.
The right to learn to be a useful member of society and to develop individual abilities.

Many of the experiments designed to examine transition from the first to the second stage have studied the phenomenon of conservation—the ability to recognize certain invariant properties of objects despite superficial changes in their appearance. As summarized by Werner (1979), research has shown that this order of progression is indeed universal, although rates of acquisition of a particular stage and even the final stage achieved may show cultural variation (a point which will be expanded in the next section). Children do indeed proceed from sensorimotor development through refinements of the preoperational stage into and toward concrete operations, and the basic pattern of the progression is similar if not identical in all cultures. In the sequence and the pattern, each child is like all children.

developmental goals

Broadly conceived, another universal for children is that they have essentially the same developmental goals. Although these goals will be defined differently in different cultures, their functions will be similar if not identical. One of these is simply to achieve maturity, to become the type of adult specified by the society as appropriate for that culture. Until recent years in the western world, there were sharply divergent patterns of behaviour acceptable for males and females, and part of the process of development consisted of appropriately internalizing these roles in order that adult behaviour for the two sexes not deviate too widely from that which was acceptable in the culture. In non-industrialized societies this sharp male-female role differentiation is still the norm, although as outside influences increase there tends to be some blurring of roles.

A major developmental task for all children is to be able to make the transition from child to parent which comes with maturity. The nurtured must become the nurturers, and our ability to parent is heavily influenced by the kind of parenting we received as young children. There are vast differences in birth rates and in the extent to which additional children mean serious challenges to the resources of the existing population and the placing of undue burdens on women. In parts of the west, there is apparently an increase in voluntary childlessness (Veevers, 1979), but this is as yet far from the norm. Without having this child-to-parent role reversal as one of the major developmental goals for all children, society would not be perpetuated.

To summarize this section, there are indeed certain universals of development that apply to children in all cultures. In particular we have highlighted the existence of certain rights, the sequence of developmental stages, and the similarity of function served by developmental goals.

commonalities

In addition to the ways in which each child is like all children, there are areas in which *each child is like some children*. The children most resembled will be those from similar cultural groups and from comparable social class structures within cultural groups. Poor children in all parts of the world have distinctive similarities.

environmental experience

Although the range of physical and social experience to which the human infant can adapt is obviously not infinite, sometimes it almost appears to be. Although all children at least in theory have families—and as indicated above they have a right to have a family—the range and variety of family constellation and the patterns of child rearing which can sustain the lives of children are broad indeed. For half a century now exciting anthropological reports chronicling cultural variations in child rearing patterns and presumably associated developmental outcomes have appeared in the scientific literature (Price-Williams, 1975). We know that wide variety exists from one culture to another in such variables as whether feeding is scheduled or on demand, by breast or bottle, age and severity of bowel and bladder training, age of weaning, type of discipline, style and identity of principal caregivers, etc. All of these differences mean that the particular experiences any given child has will be markedly influenced by his or her cultural affiliation.

But there are also major commonalities within specific cultures that are also likely to influence developmental outcomes. My colleagues and I have for over a decade been involved in research dealing with characteristics of a young child's home environment which identify the extent to which that environment acts either as a facilitator or an inhibitor of development. We have developed an instrument, the HOME (Home Observation for

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Measurement of the Environment), which examines characteristics of the home environment in such areas as the emotional and verbal responsivity of the mother or other important caregiver, the degree to which the child is accepted as a person, the organization of the physical and temporal environment, the availability of toys and play materials, parental involvement with the child in teaching and learning, and the provision of some variety in daily experience. We have shown that having or not having access to clusters of these characteristics does indeed show an association with development in the children. Furthermore, prediction of subsequent child development will probably be more successful if knowledge of the developmental environment is added to knowledge of the child's own inherent potential for growth. Children growing up in similar HOMES are indeed more like those other children than they are like children from the same cultural group who have significantly different patterns of home experience. Similarities in these patterns of early experience help to identify clusters of children who will in important ways be "like one another."

developmental pinnacles

Children are like some, but by no means like all, children in terms of what might be called the pinnacles or end points of development. To illustrate this point, I should like to refer again to the cross-cultural data relating to empirical tests of Piagetian theory. It will be recalled that the sequence of stages appears to be a universal. But what about the rates of acquisition of indicators of the different stages and the end points? If we look at development during the sensorimotor period, we find as indicated above that the sub-stages of development are identical in American, European, African and Asian samples of infants (Dasen, 1977). However, African infants generally show certain precocities in motor aspects of development during this period (Konner, 1977), a precocity which Werner (1972) has interpreted in terms of patterns of caregiver-child interaction and the values placed upon such behaviour in these areas.

In terms of the transition from preoperational to concrete-operational thought, cultural differences are again quite apparent. Most western children achieve conservation of both continuous and discontinuous quantities around the age of six or seven years, whereas children in developing countries show this level of thinking some two to six years later. However, most children in all cultural groups eventually achieve this level of thinking. Werner (1979) attributes these differences to such factors as whether children grow up under "traditional" conditions or exposure to a Western style of life (particularly Western-type schooling), to the ecologic-economic demands a particular society makes on its children, to maternal teaching style, and to whether the socialization values of the society stress obedience to authority or initiative and self-reliance.

Important differences are also found in relation to the acquisition of formal operational thought. Whereas in all the societies studied cross-culturally in relation to the acquisition of concrete operations most of the children eventually achieve the criteria of the new level of thought, this is not necessarily true with regard to formal operations. For that matter, Kohlberg and Gilligan (1971) maintain that only some 30-50 percent of late adolescents in Western cultures achieve this pattern of thought, in contrast to Piaget's estimate of 75 percent. Studies reported in Dasen (1977) would indicate that the acquisition rate is even lower than this for adolescents in relatively isolated, non-technological groups. Werner (1979) comments on such findings as follows:

> "In modernizing cultures, formal thought may be considered an essential adaptive mode that provides advantages in coping with the demands of technology, education, and urbanization. Since Western science and technology does not necessarily represent a form of thought valued in every culture around the world, nor, for that matter in some subcultures in the United States and Europe, the Piagetian sequence of the development of operational thinking from concrete to formal is likely to be somewhat ethnocentric" (p. 224).

learning styles

Children are also like some other children—and different from some children—in the ways in which they approach learning tasks. Many years ago, at the dawn of the mental test movement, people naively thought that they could use the same test to compare children from different backgrounds and thereby draw inferences about comparative intelligence. As documentation of the association between test scores and pattern of environmental experience began to accumulate, researchers began to try to assemble and standardize "culture-free" tests. After it became increasingly obvious that there was no such thing, the objective was modified to be the development of "culture-fair" tests. In the cross-cultural Piagetian studies cited above, the same sort of difficulty applies. Even if the testing strategy is to produce a test equally unfamiliar to children in all cultural groups, this cannot erase differences related to wariness toward strangers (testers), willingness to display knowledge or prowess, and the cultural pervasiveness of some of the basic concepts implicit in all testing procedures (e.g., matching stimuli, imitating, answering culturally irrelevant questions, etc.).

One area in which children are "like some children" is what has been called "cognitive style." This is a term coined by Witkin and colleagues (Witkin, Dyke, Faterson, Goodenough, and Karp, 1962) to describe the progression of children from less to more differentiated in the degree to which they can separate key elements of a stimulus from the background in which it is embedded. This has been studied by procedures in which the perceptual cues are somehow misleading to a child or adult and can lead to a misjudgment about the key component of the stimulus. If the pull of the background is too strong, the viewer is said to be "field dependent"; if the ground can be partially disregarded, the viewer is described as more differentiated and "field independent."

Within any cultural group, there is progression toward field independence with increasing age, a developmental pattern which is very strong in Western societies. Across cultures a simple generalization is not possible, as ecological, social, and biological conditions are all related to the extent to which a population will be field dependent or independent. In general, greater field independence will be found in societies in which family patterns encourage initiative and resourcefulness and do not mandate instant obedience. In

some societies girls and women have been found to be more field dependent than boys and men, and these differences are more pronounced in agricultural than in hunting societies. Werner (1979) interprets this as related to such factors as the greater adaptiveness of a high degree of social sensitivity in women in agricultural societies. As girls in various parts of the world have more role options open to them, any sex differences in cognitive style may weaken. Furthermore, if field dependence does indeed signify a greater sensitivity to the social environment, it is to be hoped that we will see an increase in such behaviour on the part of boys and men. This represents a clear case of possibly false assumptions about a perceptual and /or learning style assumed to be somehow "better" than another approach to learning tasks. But at the present time, there are cultural differences in such styles, thus indicating another area in which children are like some other children.

To summarize this section, I have suggested that there are commonalities among children growing up within certain social and cultural groups which make them "like some children" and highlight the extent to which they are different from other children. Specifically, I have mentioned the patterns of social and physical environmental experiences to which children are exposed, the developmental end points which can be observed in different settings, and the cognitive styles which characterize children's approach to situations in which they must arrive at some deductions about the proper relationship between figure and ground.

individualities

And there are ways in which each child is like no other child. This point is such a basic component of the philosophy of all quality early childhood programmes that, despite its importance, I shall be brief in discussing it. Each child is a unique individual in terms of genetic potential, sensory capacity, history of reinforcement, ability to relate to other people, energy level, temperament, interests, motivation—and one could go on and on with such a list. Although most persons well trained in child development recognize and respect this individuality, we sometimes design our programmes as though we did not really believe our own rhetoric about individual differences. We still use in schools the world over, chronological age as our most common method of grouping children for instruction. This is done in spite of the ample proof available in developmental studies of the variability in achievement patterns and readiness for new learning shown by children of any particular age. Similarly, many educators refer to "*the* curriculum" which will be made available to any group of children, as though all children within any group would be equally receptive to it, equally interested in the teaching-learning activities, and equally able to respond and move forward the same amount and at the same rate.

working with and for children

Recognition of these universalities, commonalities; and individualities in children has clear implications for those of us who consider ourselves to be child advocates and for organizations like OMEP concerned with fostering the development of all children and helping to create conditions in different societies which will allow children to experience a happy childhood and move toward fruitful and gratifying adult lives.

Child advocates need to adopt a global perspective. Most of the members of this organization are dedicated child advocates; certainly I consider myself one. Yet probably most of us devote the greater part of our advocacy efforts to helping promote the welfare of the children in our own countries. There is nothing wrong with such patriotism for we need to have intense concerns for those children who are "close to home" for each of us. But at the same time we must develop an umbrella of concern that will shelter all the children on the globe.

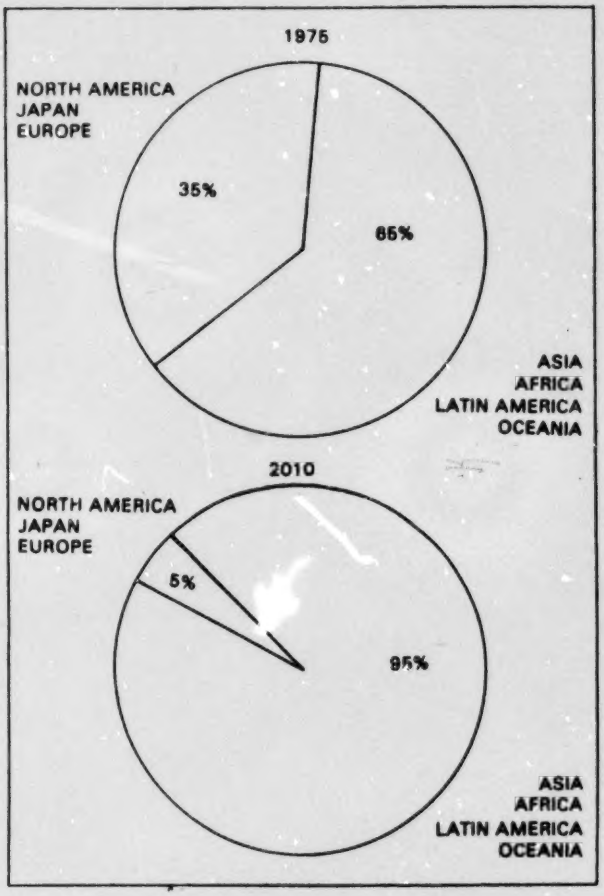
If one could not find altruistic reasons for such a global concern, then brief consideration of the population trends reflected in Figure 2 might provide egocentric reasons. Note that in 1975 children from the most industrialized parts of the world accounted for 35 percent of the world's population. However, at current birth and death rates, that percentage is predicted to decrease to no more than 5 percent by the year 2010, by which time the world's population will have again doubled.

When one looks at these data one could speculate on the wisdom—or lack of same—of showing no concern for the development of children in the entire world. The foolishness of the narrow and parochial view becomes immediately apparent. We have to be concerned with the children of the whole world because, if they are not fed, not educated, not loved and nurtured, then the consequences for those that represent what will be at that time only 5 percent of the world's population are likely to be grave indeed. Perhaps we still come to realize that when one child starves anywhere in the world—and there are thousands of children who starve daily, little by little, in many parts of the world—our own children are also malnourished.

We need to respect and preserve the unique cultural heritage of all children. It is perhaps fitting for an American to speak of the importance of preserving cultural heritage, for surely no country has a worse record of doing this than we have. If America was to become the great "melting pot" into which cultures with long and distinguished histories were to be dumped and out of which came the homogenized new American, then old values had to be forfeited and old styles changed. I grew up in the state of Texas in a region which had many immigrants from Germany, from what is now Czechoslovakia, and certainly from Mexico and Spain. When I was a child there were no Oktoberfests, no fiestas, and certainly no child or adult wanted to be caught speaking German or Czech or Spanish. Our legacy from these practices is that today America is the only nation in the world whose educated adults can often speak only one language—and that one not very well. If children from these immigrant families were sent to school speaking no English, they were nonetheless taught in English—regardless of whether they could understand the teacher.

Fortunately in our country this pattern has now changed, slightly and hopefully other countries in which large numbers of immigrants must be assimilated into a new society will not make the same mistake. All our early childhood programmes are now quite consciously multi-

Figure 2 Population projections to the year 2010 based on current population trends.



cultural and multi-ethnic. The traditions of different cultural and religious groups are taught and celebrated with affection and respect. It is to be hoped that this practice will continue worldwide and that all children can come to feel that the cultural group represented by their families will not be ridiculed or devalued anywhere.

Respect and foster individuality. Although we are constantly "shaping" children to fit the societies that we adults have inherited, it is to be hoped that the type of advocate represented in this organization will not be guilty of trying to fit all children into the same preconceived mould. Children *must* conform to certain regulations and social patterns; if they cannot conform to some extent, their safety cannot be guaranteed, and they are unlikely to earn the respect of their peers and mentors. However, it is to be hoped that we can accept the uniqueness inherent in all children and not assign implicit values to different children as a function of their patterns of individuality. This point of view would mean that handicapped children have those same rights specified in Figure 1 just as "normal" children should. It also means that children who grow up in environmental conditions minimally conducive to optimal development have rights to the amount and type of societal intervention that will to some extent give their own individuality full opportunity to develop.

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